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UNCLAS LAGOS 000146

SIPDIS

USDOL WASHDC FOR ROBERT YOUNG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LASCO CALLS OFF STRIKE

REF: Abuja 99

1. On January 21, shortly after the Labor and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO) began a nationwide strike to protest GON policies pertaining to petroleum pricing, NLC President Adams Oshiomhole made an official announcement to suspend the strike. The announcement came before labor and civil society groups were scheduled to meet in Lagos to develop a strategy in preparation for a prolonged battle with the GON.

2. Motajo Abdul Kareem, Assistant Secretary for the National Union of Air Transport Employees, told Labspec that LASCO made the decision to ensure that the organization complies with a "request" from the Federal Appeals Court (reftel). While the court made no definitive ruling on January 20 regarding a GON appeal contesting the NLC's right to strike, both parties were ordered to return to court on January 26 to argue their cases. In the meantime, the court "advised" the GON to discontinue a 1.50 Naira per liter levy on imported fuel charged to oil marketers. In turn, the court "advised" the NLC to suspend its strike pending a final ruling on the GON appeal.

3. Several hours before Oshiomhole's announcement, NLC Deputy President Joseph Akinlaja told Laboff that LASCO would only suspend the strike when lower prices resulting from the discontinued levy are reflected at the pump. The NLC now fears that moving forward would be in violation of the Federal Appeals Court "request," thus damaging its position when it returns to court for further argument on January 26.

Hinson-Jones